



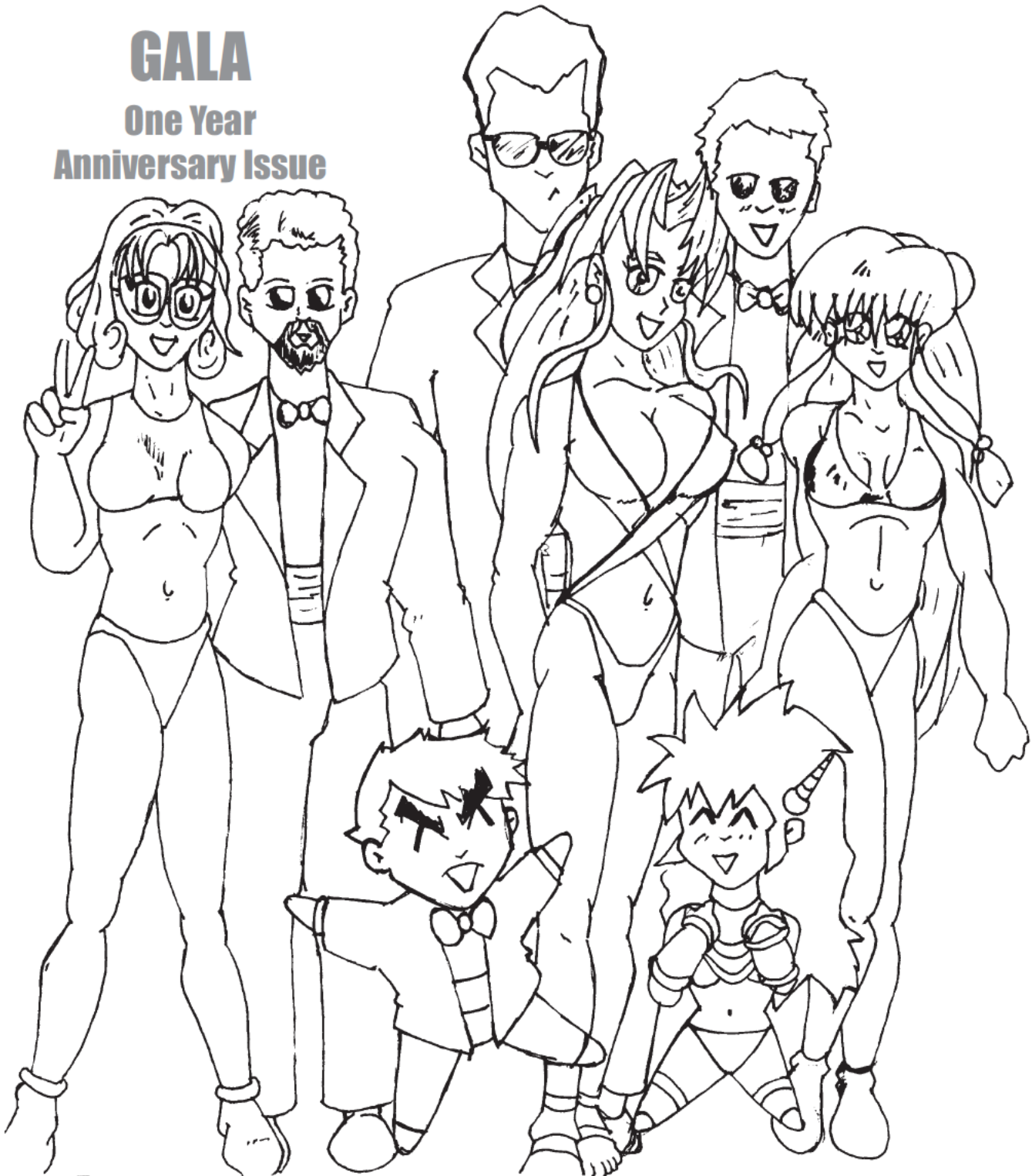
A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
COVERING VIDEO GAMES, ANIMÉ,
AND RELATED TOPICS
VOL. 2 • No. 13 • JULY 1998

ON SCREEN CHAOS



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GALA One Year Anniversary Issue



ON SCREEN CHAOS

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 13 • JULY, 1998

ON SCREEN CHAOS IS THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ON SCREEN SOCIETY. FOUNDED IN JULY, 1997 AS ON SCREEN, DEDICATED TO THE REVIEW AND ENJOYMENT OF VIDEO GAMES, JAPANESE ANIMATION, AND OTHER RELATED TOPICS. ON SCREEN CHAOS IS COPYRIGHTED ©1998 BY THE ON SCREEN SOCIETY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THIS DOCUMENT AND ITS CONTENTS MAY BE FREELY DISTRIBUTED IN PAPER OR ELECTRONIC FORMAT PROVIDED THAT: A. NO FEE OF ANY KIND IS CHARGED FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION, AND B. PROPER CREDIT IS GIVEN TO THE AUTHOR(S) AND/OR ARTIST(S) AND THIS PUBLICATION.

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WELCOME!

Well, everyone, we actually did it. It's a bit late, but here it is: the Gala Spectacular One-Year Anniversary Issue of *On Screen Chaos* (or, the GSOYAI, if you prefer.) Complete with our Year End Awards, OSFF profiles, and plenty of reviews of what's lurking in the stores and arcades nowadays.

I really need to say thanks again to everyone who makes this possible; as you can see, this is our largest issue yet, and the enormity of work that goes into each one of these isn't always apparent, even to me. So thanks again to the Shred Man, Svenyip and Happosai for their contributions of games, artwork, and articles for us to present to you.

And thanks to all of you, our readers, for giving us someone to present it all to. ☺

—TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

N64's first RPG inspires a sense of "Who Cares?"

System: Nintendo 64
Publisher: THQ Inc
Release Date: June, 1998



MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

THQ hasn't had too good a batting average this year. First, they released the absolutely horrible *WCW Nitro* for the Sony Playstation, a game that caused them to lose their license to make WCW games (EA Sports now has that distinction). Then, after a few delays and a lot of hype as being "the first RPG for the Nintendo 64," *Quest 64* was released.

I had assumed a year ago when I first heard about this game being in development, that "Quest 64" would just be a tentative title until they came up with something more appropriate. But no— this game was created for one purpose: to try and attract the attention and money of all the RPG-starved N64 owners out there who couldn't afford to buy a Playstation.

The game falls into your traditional "holy relic stolen by bad guy, world on brink of war, defeat bad guy, recover relic, save world" formula. Your main character moves a lot like Mario in *Mario 64*— except the inability for you to jump or even fall more than a slight distance limits your maneuverability a great deal.

From what little I played, the world looked to be rather large— but a lot of that was just empty space. I got tired of being forced to run for a half minute or more of road just to get from one room to the next. I left town earlier than I should

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Atlus brings a 3-year old strategy game to the States



System: Sony Playstation
Publisher: Atlus
Released Date: May, 1998

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

Tactics Ogre was a game that came out for the Super Famicom back in 1995. But since it was never translated and released over in America, Atlus decided to re-release it on the Sony Playstation, as it was an impressive strategy/RPG back then, and still is today.

Tactics Ogre continues the *Ogre Battle* series of games, of which the only other one brought over to America was *Ogre Battle Episode 5: The March of The Black Queen*. *Tactics Ogre* is Episode 7, so it looks like Episodes 1-4 and 6 suffered the same fate as several of the *Final Fantasy* games, and were never noticed enough to be released here.

In any case, it didn't take me much time playing the game before I was ready to write a review of it, because in many ways it was almost a sequel to a game released a few months ago, *Final Fantasy Tactics*. The similarities in the game layout and design are uncanny. The character display, the overworld map and movement, the pre-fight positioning of troops, the turn-based "AT" attack rounds, everything is virtually identical between the two games. Since they were made by two different companies, I'm curious how this could have happened without one side crying copyright infringement. Maybe one company paid royalties to the other; I don't have the answer, though.

There are a number of differences between *Tactics Ogre* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*, though. First off, you can have a whopping ten controllable members in your party (you were restricted to five in *FFT*). Instead of a confusing system of astrological signs to determine how well two characters can interact with each other— through combat, healing, or whatever— *Tactics Ogre* uses an equally confusing system of elements, terrain type and moral alignment.

Unlike *FFT*, the most important thing to have in *Tactics Ogre* is a level advantage. If you're fighting something that's only one level above you, your attacks will be severely ham-

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Hot Shots Golf *an adventure on the links*



System: Sony Playstation
Publisher: Sony
Release Date: May, 1998

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

I know what you're probably thinking, but *Hot Shots Golf* is actually a very well done, old-school golf game. It feels a lot like many other golf games (especially like the old game for the original N.E.S. starring Mario, called simply *Golf* if I remember correctly), but it has a lot of neat features that I think will give the game lasting value.

First off, it's drawn really well.

There's very little load time, the graphics are beautiful, and the angles show a wide area of the course so you'll never feel lost. The characters also have a definite animé-aura around them, which is perhaps part of the appeal for me as well. The background music is nice (although a little too dramatic when you're trying to shoot a birdie, for example), but you have the option to turn it off if it begins to grate on your nerves.

Another nice feature is along with regular golf, there is also an 18-hole miniature golf course included in the game, for people who are fans of the less physically challenging version of golf.

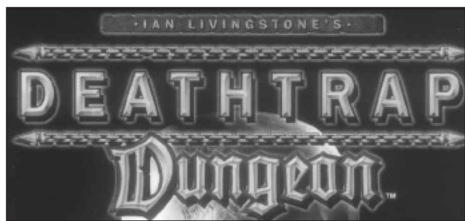
A feature that makes the game good to own, but gets in the way of fun for rental purposes, is that there's a lot of the game that you have to "unlock," presumably by playing certain courses well enough. At the beginning, you can

only play on one of the five courses available, and use two of the ten characters playable. It's a sign of the times, I suppose, when even golf games have to go the route of *Mortal Kombat* and have more hidden features than ones that are immediately available.

Oh, and did I mention that you get experience points and levels in this game? I played through the miniature golf mode, ending up with a less than impressive 13 over par, which gave me a whopping 1 XP. Only 49 to go until next level. I think levels determine how many courses you can play on, but I'm not sure.

However, *Hot Shots Golf* is a nice, easy-to-learn, golf simulation that I think could be quite a lot of fun for a few days of rental. If you're really a golf freak, I'd recommend buying it, as it has enough variety (if you can unlock enough of it) to play for quite some time.

Deathtrap Dungeon a Lara-less Tomb Raider



System: Sony Playstation
Publisher: Eidos
Release Date: May, 1998

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

From what I saw of the *Deathtrap Dungeon* ads on television, I thought I was getting into a *Fighting Force* clone. The ads certainly led me to believe that *Deathtrap* was more like a 3-D *Gauntlet* than anything else. Unfortunately, that's not the case at all.

Deathtrap Dungeon is, for all intents and purposes, a *Tomb Raider* wannabe. You control a single character traversing a *Doom*-like maze, with each level having a unique objective (most of which seem to have the phrase 'solve the puzzle' in them). A typical objective follows the pattern of, 'Get item A by using items B and C to open the area where item A is located,' where items B and C can be traditional keys or various mech-

anisms like lifts and levers.

The On Screen bias against polygons is again justified in this game. I'm sorry to say that a leather-clad jumble of trapezoids simply doesn't do it for me. And these particular polygons are notoriously bad— for example, the female lead's lower front and back have identical texture maps. They're virtually indistinguishable. Plus, there are an inordinate number of locations in which the polygon breakdown is sad to the point of being humorous; you can watch your character walk around with no head, or see directly inside their skull.

The breakdown is probably due to the roving camera, much like in *Super Mario 64*, which changes perspective depending on where in the maze you are. This camera isn't very bright, though, and you'll often radically switch perspectives, requiring you to change your control direction 180°. The controls are standard, first-person type controls, which is terribly confusing considering the third-person viewpoint.

I will point out, however, that there are plenty of good aesthetics in *Deathtrap Dungeon*, primarily in the hacking of your enemies. Limbs and heads are routinely severed, depending on where you strike your foes' bodies.

The enemies are well-drawn, if not terribly original, and it's neat to be walking around and find a head lying in your path serving as a landmark. The light sourcing, while impressive when dealing with bright flashes such as spells and fireballs, is lacking overall. It's often very difficult to get a sense of depth due to inaccurate background shading.

Deathtrap also features plenty of your standard weapons, spells, and magical items, although there's nothing revolutionary in the way of originality here.

There isn't any one thing that could have been done to improve *Deathtrap Dungeon*; it just kind of lacks. While it tries to be diverse by combining elements of a few different genres, it doesn't do so terribly well. However, I do think that a two-player simultaneous mode would have helped immensely; it could make the exploration element much more innovative and enjoyable.

The bottom line is that *Deathtrap* tries to immerse you in another *Doom*-style world while adding a larger element of exploration. Unfortunately, it feels awfully forced. Admittedly, I went into this game with the wrong mindset, but it certainly didn't do anything to pull me out of it.



ON SCREEN presents



The 1997-98 Year End Awards

Awarded to our favorite video games and anim  from the past year

These awards are meant to reflect the personal opinions of the On Screen staff, and nothing more. Done more by consensus than by an actual vote, we feel these titles best meet our standards of excellence and enjoyment.

Our criteria for nomination was simple. For video games, they had to be released sometime during 1997 or 1998. For anim , each film or series had to first be seen by an On

Screen member sometime in 1997 or 1998. From there, it was simply a question of what we liked best.

Not everyone will agree with our choices, and there are even some staffers who will argue against them (and for their own individual choices), but we feel that the winners we've listed here are all deserving of the title of "On Screen's Favorites."

1997-1998 Fighting Game of the Year

Street Fighter III by Capcom

For some of us, at least, originality still has a warm fuzzy spot in our hearts. While the world may not agree, we here at On Screen found Street Fighter III to be everything we had been hoping for. A worthy addition to the Street Fighter legacy.

*Honorable mention:
Marvel vs. Capcom
Vampire Savior
Street Fighter EX + Alpha*

1997-1998 Role Playing Game of the Year

Wild Arms by Sony

While everyone expected great things from Final Fantasy VII, Wild Arms came out of nowhere, and without all the hype, and all the anticipation, quietly proved itself to be one of the most epic adventures in recent history. FF7 was good, but we all knew it would be. Wild Arms was great, because it was a surprise.

*Honorable mention:
Final Fantasy VII
Final Fantasy Tactics*

1997-1998 Best Video Game Soundtrack

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night by KCET/Konami

If it's done well, the soundtrack to a video game can become more important than the graphics. Great music can set the mood like nothing else can. Castlevania's music accomplishes this better than any other game we've played.

*Honorable mention:
Parappa the Rapper
Wild Arms
Final Fantasy VII*

1997-1998 Best Video Game Villain

Sephiroth from Final Fantasy VII

Sephiroth is one of the first villains in a long time that we've actually really hated, yet still thought was incredibly cool. Who could possibly think a guy who wields a six foot long sword isn't the ultimate thang? He rules, pure and simple; even if he did kill Aeris.

*Honorable mention:
Gill (Street Fighter III)
Onslaught (Marvel vs. Capcom)*

1997-1998
Animé Series of the Year
(six or more episodes)

Magic Knight Rayearth
by Polygram Video

There's something odd about this series that you just can't help but like. It looks and feels like it should be a role-playing game (and will be soon). The character development is outstanding— you really get to know Umi, Fu and Hikaru as they grow and change in the land of Cefiro, and in the process, they capture the hearts of their audience.

Honorable mention:
Bastard!
Video Girl Ai

1997-1998
Animé Feature of the Year
(sixty minutes or longer)

Fatal Fury
by Viz Video

Another one of those underdogs, Fatal Fury is one of those movies you think looks pretty cool, but are afraid the writers are just going to butcher. Well, Fatal Fury mixes a well-known cast and an original plot with some great fight scenes to provide an excellent final product. It's not just the best video game animé; it's the best animé film we've seen this year.

Honorable mention:
A Wind Named Amnesia
Armitage 3: Polymatrix

1997-1998
Animé Mini-Series of the Year

Dragon Half
by A.D. Vision

Super-deformed slimes, a pop-singing dragon slayer, and a Herculean half-dragon... what more do you need? Hilarity ensues from the very beginning of Dragon Half, with a great cast and tons of laugh-out-loud lines. Animé doesn't always have to be serious or violent to be great. Sometimes, being completely ridiculous is good enough.

Honorable mention:
New Cutey Honey
Devil Hunter Yoko

1997-1998
Animé Heroine of the Year

Mink
from Dragon Half

Complete with super strength and ridiculous dialog, she's brave, heroic, silly, and undeniably cute. What more can you ask for in a heroine? Whether you're into super deformed mayhem or more traditional type artwork, Mink is just the perfect girl to save your day!

Honorable mention:
Ai-Chan (Video Girl Ai)
Umi, Fu & Hikaru (Magic Knights Rayearth)

1997-1998 Overall
Video Game of the Year

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo
by Capcom

*This is the first game in years that truly appeals to just about everyone: fighting game fans, puzzle fans, animé fans... everyone can enjoy a rousing game of Puzzle Fighter. A solid puzzle engine with an absolutely hilarious interface, Puzzle Fighter is the ultimate party game. We've spent entire evenings having eight player tournaments with people who've never heard of Street Fighter. No other game in a long, long time has had that kind of appeal. Plus, it was the first game to feature Sakura, Dan, Morrigan **and** Felicia. With a cast like that, how can you go wrong? Puzzle Fighter may not be everyone's favorite game, but it's the one game that everyone can enjoy.*

Honorable Mention:
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

It wouldn't be On Screen Chaos's gala anniversary issue if we didn't mention the On Screen Fighting Federation, right? So we thought we'd give you some insight into the men who bring you this chaos every month and who are

constantly in competition for the coveted OSFF gold.

Thanks go out to each member of the Clique, as each one of these bios is in fact an amalgam of information contributed by each individual member.



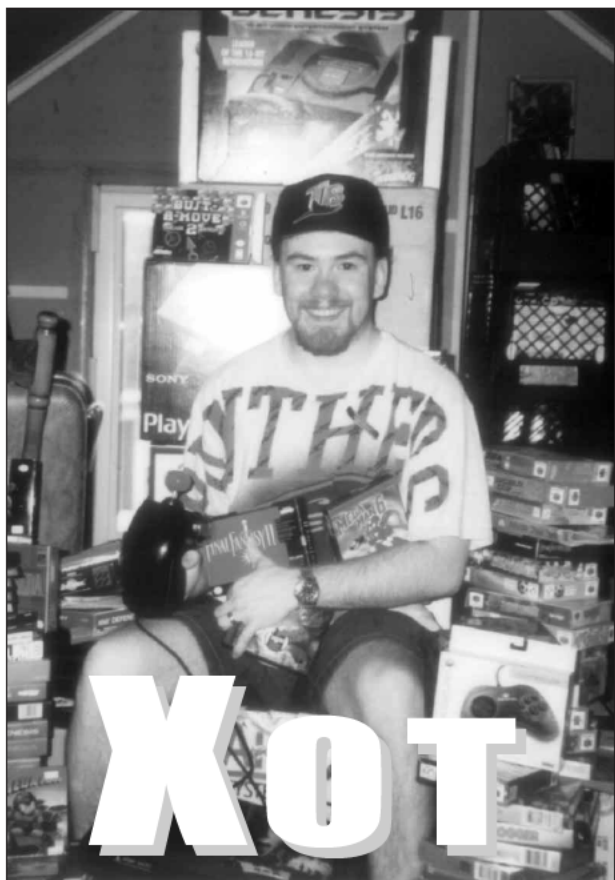
THE ON SCREEN

Tony Morse

*"It is better to know thy enemy and not see him
than to see thy enemy and not know him."*

DOB: 06/07/74

Theme Music: Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme)



The scribe, the designer, the producer of *On Screen Chaos*. Having always been the unofficial leader-type dude in our cliques (whether he liked it or not), it seems only natural that he now leads us in On Screen. As the collector of video games that were created before members of the up-and-coming generation were even alive, he's had plenty of opportunity to experience many different facets of the gaming phenomenon. Utilizing a serious, poker face-type offense, Xot seems to focus on the entire match as opposed to the current round.

A Ken player from way back in Champion Edition days (arguing that Ryu was overrated), he seems to do best with the dreaded Shotokan even now. Ken was *made* for Xot. Almost pure offense, with a surprise around every corner. Diligent, determined... did we mention offensive?

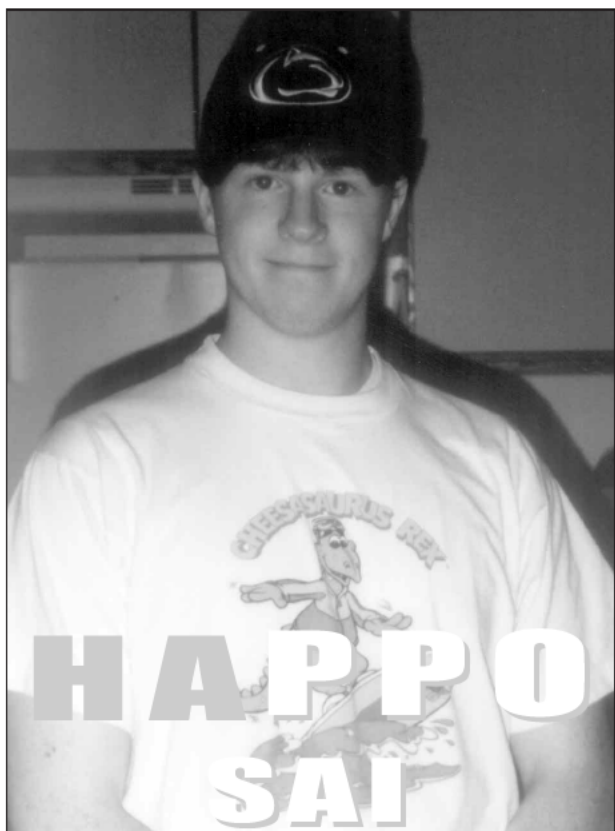
That's not to say he can't hold his own with other characters- he decidedly won a shotokan-free title defense. *Mortal Kombat*, another one of Xot's strong suits, has not seen enough matches in the OSFF for all to witness the wrath of Xot, but that may change (gulp!). All of the above applies when facing him in any game except one from the *Virtua* series, and then he just doesn't have to try. And any lack of skill he may possess is more than made up for with cheesy grabs and a quick proton cannon.

Neal Mulcahy

"Don't roll, dammit."

DOB: 06/29/77

Theme Music: Ryu's Stage Music (Arranged Mix)



The man, the myth, the collector of import Playstation games. Clearly the strongest member of the On Screen Fighting Federation- it's very difficult to come up with a challenge in which you even have a 50-50 chance of defeating him.

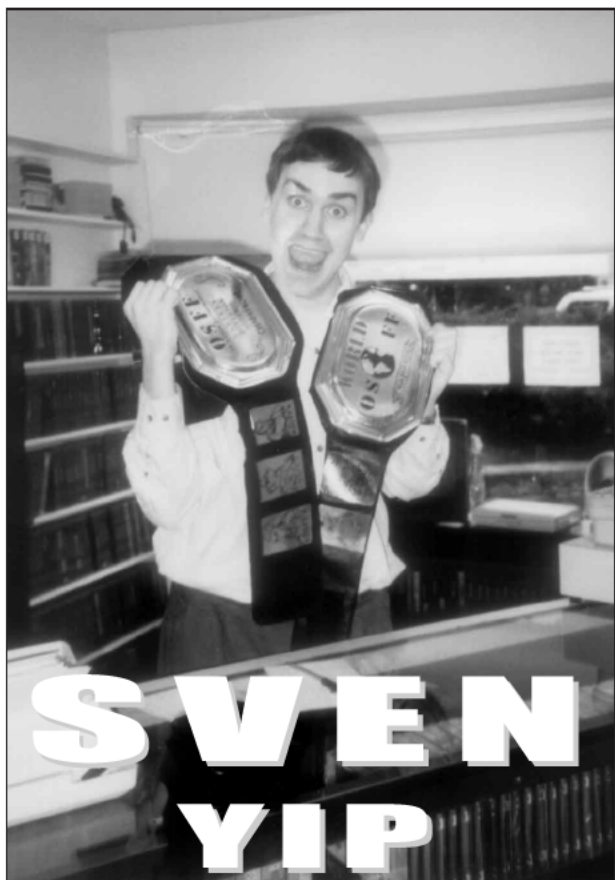
If anyone in On Screen can be considered the computer geek, it would have to be Nealie. Always seeming to have some project going on that involves his computer (or someone else's, for that matter), Happosai often tends to be a difficult man to track down.

If Neal's not spending time with some computer thing or running around with his girlfriend, he must be playing fighting games. (He claims to have a job, but we're not so sure it isn't just a cover for playing *Marvel vs. Capcom*.) It goes without saying that Nealie is the best of us when it comes to fighting games, and it's never a surprise when he decides he wants to come out of hiding to regain the OSFF title. His only weakness seems to be that he sometimes tends to underestimate his opponents.

Neal's probably logged more time than any of us laying the smack down on would be competitors in local (and not-so-local) arcades, and having the big three systems at home doesn't dull his fighter's edge either.



FIGHTING FEDERATION



Michael Troupe

"I will meditate and then throw you."

DOB: 03/11/74

Theme Music: Hell Frozen Over

(Stone Cold Steve Austin's Theme)

Being the Grand High Poobah at a video game rental store makes knowledge of the latest titles essential (or at least reasonably useful). Every game you've heard of, he has played. Every game you've played, he's pretty much mastered. It is this knowledge (plus a dubious amount of free time) that makes Svenyip our lead correspondent, as well as the current On Screen Fighting Federation Eastern Division Champion, and the first man ever to hold both belts simultaneously.

Mike also uses some of that free time to maintain the OSFF-ED web site, which, unlike Xot's page, actually gets updated. This is the best spot to find info on the OSFF as well as nifty animé stuff and general Svenyippity silliness.

Unlike Tony and Shawn, Mike has a primarily defensive style in most games. How else could someone use Zangetty-zief so well? His matches are almost always obnoxiously close. Normal throwing physics do not apply, for Mike seemingly has the ability to throw from greater range, for more damage, and to just plain toss you to death.

No matter what you try, he seems to learn how to defend against it quickly. If defeating a style were a lock, then consider him a locksmith. All we can say is, be careful, defend, try not to be repetitious, and don't play him in *Toshinden*. Remember, if you are unpredictable, he sometimes becomes repetitious... watch for it!

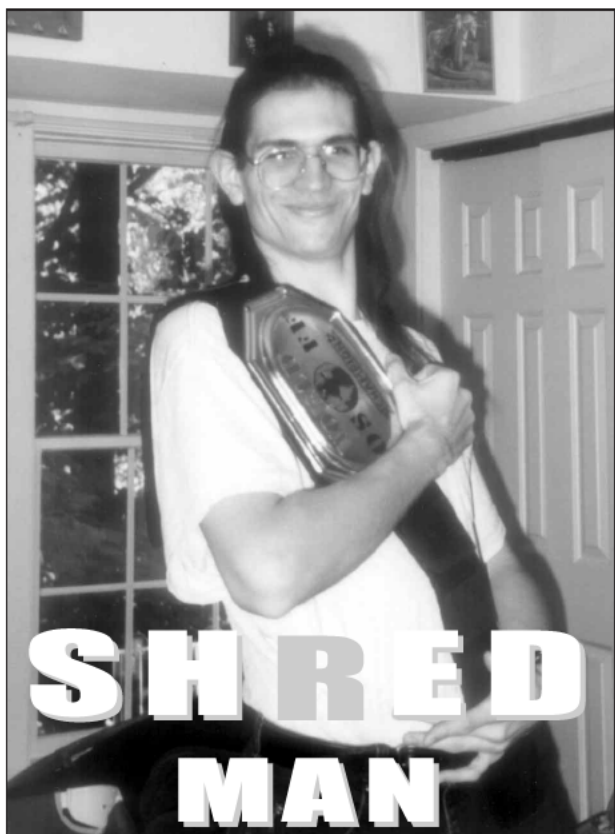
Shawn Dumas

"I'm an equal opportunity tyrant."

DOB: 09/08/74

Theme Music: Diesel Blues

(Big Daddy Cool's Theme)



The forger, the builder, the creator of the Federation belts and, as of the time of this writing, current On Screen Fighting Federation World Champion. Avid collector of *Sailor Moon* animé and perhaps (along with Svenyip) the only other person who understands just how damn good that series can get at times, the Shred Man also provides us with our monthly allotment of artwork. Along with co-author Xot, he's the artist behind an underground comic, *Neo-Life*, which you can learn more about at his new, but impressive, web site.

His animé collection is fearsome, as are his abilities in the *Darkstalkers* series. Felicia, Alex, and the entire cast of *Samurai Shodown III* are among the characters with whom he will handily serve you a cup of 'shut the hell up.'

"You can't escape!" when he has meter. Even if he doesn't know the character's super move, he will get it off at the precise moment necessary to thrash you. Well rounded with most characters, he is never a push-over. Watch out, especially, if you take his belt. Prepare to witness a strange transformation into a fighting machine who's been programmed to regain the almighty title. People should use precaution when facing him, and always remember to block the supers, if you can!

ABOUT FACE ABOUT FACE

Many of you already know how challenging it is to put together one of these things before the dreaded DEADLINE, so it will probably come as no surprise to you that sometimes we don't have adequate time to check out every aspect of a game before writing our reviews.

So, unlike a lot of other magazines out there, we're willing to admit that sometimes we screw up. A game that we've

enjoyed for a couple of days can become nerve-racking in a matter of weeks. Likewise, a game we just couldn't get into in a week or so might become a favorite in a few months.

This section is intended to correct a few errors on our part; namely, revise the opinions expressed in our past reviews, and to provide you with the relevant information as to *why* we've changed our minds.

X-Men vs. Street Fighter EX Sony Playstation

A couple months ago, I called *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* (they dropped the "EX Edition" tag on the U.S. release) for the Sony Playstation a "surprisingly playable game." And comparing it to games like *Marvel Super Heroes* and the first *X-Men*, it's still true. But if you try to play a two player game, or with characters like Juggernaut, Storm or Magneto, much of the playability is lost.

Two-player matches, even on the highest Turbo speed, just seem to take forever. Since the characters automatically regain life after they haven't been hit for more than a second, the matches are longer than they would be in the arcade. And certain moves from Storm or Magneto cause unbelievable slow-down when you attempt to use them.

I still recommend taking a look at the game, maybe renting it for a night. But you may not enjoy it as much as you might think if you read my initial review.

—Svenyip

Street Fighter EX + Alpha Sony Playstation

While I still pretty much agree with my original analysis that *EX+α* is nothing terribly new, I have to admit that I really like this game. Maybe it's the fact that Xot owns it now and I have real opponent on a semi-regular basis. Maybe it's the fact that we've warped the voices to something so hilarious you can't help but like the game. Maybe it's just that nothing *good* has come out recently and now *EX+α* doesn't look quite so mundane.

The bottom line is, we here at On Screen *like* this game. Having played it a lot recently, we've overlooked some of its drawbacks (such as the 3-D polygon thing). Even Skullomania has his appeal. So instead of being just another game, we now consider it a true *Street Fighter* game, and are even looking forward to *SF EX+α2*.

—Shred Man

Clock Tower Sony Playstation

In my initial review, I correctly stated that I expected to get a month or so's enjoyment out of this game. However, I also got two weeks of utter hatred.

I stand by what I said earlier about this game, but now having reached the final scenario, I must warn people to back off. The last area of this game is *incredibly* annoying!

Items in *Clock Tower* must be retrieved in a certain order.

Unfortunately, it's not necessarily the case that you need item A to get item B, only that you get item A *before* item B. What often happens is you will discover an item, and a new item will miraculously appear in a position that you have searched before.

The chase scenes rapidly grow tedious as well. As you are exploring the same castle over and over (for reasons explained above), Scissorman keeps coming out, forcing you to drop whatever you're doing, and make your way to the one location where you're guaranteed to shake him. It's boring, and it's a pain to have to try to retrace your steps afterwards.

I did eventually earn four of the endings. But getting my first 'good' ending was more work than fun, and I have no intention of ever trying to get the rest: The game has been sold.

—Xot

Bubble Bobble featuring Rainbow Islands Sega Saturn

In my initial review, I stated that *Bubble Bobble* was nothing special, just a decent port of the arcade original, and the *Rainbow Islands* was the reason to get this disc. Well, since then, my wife and I have spent many a morning in the wee hours of the night playing a 'quick' game of *Bubble Bobble*, and both of us lost the majority of our interest in *Rainbow Islands*.

Maybe it's just the two-player simultaneous, but *Bubble Bobble* really is a more addictive and more enjoyable game. Don't get me wrong, I still think *Rainbow Islands* is a great, classic vertical side-scroller, but it gets very difficult really quickly, and the boss fights rapidly become annoying. I still like this game, and I stick by my initial review of it, but it's just not as captivating as I once thought.

Now, back to *Bubble Bobble*...

—Xot

Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsī Sony Playstation

Well, I hate to admit this, but I'm the only one who likes this game. I still think that *Teräs Käsī* is a great game, but I've never found anyone else who can even *tolerate* it. Even my wife, who I played most of my vs. fights against, got tired of it, because I wouldn't let the wookie win.

Granted, the super moves are way too powerful, the characters aren't balanced too well, and it's a tad on the easy side, but I still get a kick out of watching Luke Skywalker get his ass handed to him by Chewie or Leia.

I'll be the first to admit that the *Star Wars* license turns a mediocre game into an above average one. But be warned: my opinion always is not indicative of the rest of the world's.

—Xot

Sailor Scouts deliver simple predictability

Series: *Sailor Moon Movies*

Number of Episodes: 3 Movies ("R," "S" and "SuperS")

Fansubber: Hitoshi Doi

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

It would almost be a form of blasphemy if I didn't do a review about where it all began for me. My watching of Japanese animation started the summer before last, when one of my friends, on a dare, made me watch the last three episodes of the first season of *Sailor Moon*. (The Japanese version, subtitled, of course.)

I found that I ended up liking it because of its predictability. It was a safe bet that every episode would center around one character, would have some life dilemma plaguing that character, would have a "monster-of-the-day" based around that dilemma, and by resolving the dilemma that character could also disable the monster long enough for *Sailor Moon* to destroy it.

A few episodes would break out of this pattern, generally when it was about time for the *Sailor Scouts* to defeat the current source behind the "monsters-of-the-day" and temporarily triumph over evil— at least until a new evil source was unleashed. These episodes were often more intense and adult than the rest of the series was, which is probably why *Sailor Moon*

kept some appeal for me. If the series had been all childish, it wouldn't have interested me very much.

The *Sailor Moon* movies fall into the predictable, monster-of-the-day style for the most part. However, since it all has to be resolved in an hour, there is generally a monster-of-the-day (which serves as a way to display the current attacks of the *Sailor Scouts* in vibrant color) and the source behind the mon-

ster-of-the-day (which is beaten by feeling more often than by physical power).

The movies are safe to watch even if you've never seen any *Sailor Moon* before. The *Sailor Moon S* movie (based off of the 3rd season) is probably the best of them in my opinion, if only because it has all of the *Sailor Scouts* in it and shows all of them

doing one of their traditional attacks. It also has a fairly simple "save the world from the evil Ice Queen" plot.

The *Sailor Moon SuperS* movie (based off of the 4th season) is okay, but it has a childish "pied piper and candy" storyline that either irritated me or seemed to be full of unintended sexual innuendos. The line of "She has penetrated the Black Dream Hole!" has to be one of the scariest in any anime, if you think about it the wrong way. While all the *Sailor Scouts* are in this one as well, some of them only do obscure attacks instead of their signature moves. Probably not a good movie to use as an introduction to the

Sailor Moon universe.

The *Sailor Moon R* movie is good because it fills in a few "missing details" for some of the characters, but probably wouldn't mean as much if you didn't know that much about the series. It also is missing the Outer Senshi, my favorite characters (because the movie is based off of the 2nd season, and the Outer Senshi were not added until the 3rd season).

It's kind of hard for me to judge *Sailor Moon* objectively anymore. After all, it's been so long since I first saw it, and I've seen so many different anime since then— some better, some worse. But *Sailor Moon* is always a safe thing to watch if you just want to see strangely dressed girls with strangely named attacks triumph over the forces of evil.

Many different subtitlers have translated and fansubbed the *Sailor Moon* movies. Hitoshi Doi is a good source to get them from, although he's kind of high priced compared to other fansubbers. On the other hand, he's slowly working on fansubbing all of *Sailor Moon* from where the American dub stops (about 130 episodes), so if you decide you like the series and want to see more, he's a good person to go to.

OVERALL RATING: 8.5/10

(*Sailor Moon* falls into my "recommended" category now, which could also be considered average. Any anime that gets a higher score than this would be those which I highly recommend, whereas lower ratings might be good anime, but only in certain situations.)

Tactics Ogre successful on PS despite being ported from Super Famicom

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pered, and if attacking something two levels above you, all your attacks (at least in the early stages) will do a whopping one point of damage. On the other hand, XP is based off of level difference as well. If you are fighting something lower level than you, you'll get 1 XP for a successful hit, and 2 XP for killing it, whereas fighting something one level above you gives you an average of 6 XP per successful hit and up to a whopping 80 XP for a killing blow.

The storyline, from what I've seen of it, has the potential to be as deep and complex as the one from *FFT*. They do an excellent job of giving each character their own distinct personality, and give you the same historian recap mode that *FFT* had in case the barrage of names and locations leaves you bewildered at first as to who's fighting who.

The graphics are unimpressive for a Playstation game, as they were directly translated from the Super Famicom game. But in a game like this, detailed graphics almost get in the way. Oddly enough, there seems to be some slowdown in the game when spells are cast during bad weather, but it's nothing that really interferes with gameplay.

In closing, while I've only spent a few hours on the game, it looks like a keeper. The battles have the potential to be more complex than the ones in *Final Fantasy Tactics* simply because of more characters on both sides. Even with the in-combat save feature, though, it's not a game that you'll be able to throw in for a fifteen-minute span and expect to make any progress on it. But if you've got the time to spend, I think you'll like what you see— even if it was ported over from that "technologically inferior" Super Famicom.



Capcom provides another laugh fest

Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix has a title long enough to be a headline

System: Arcade
Publisher: Capcom
Release Date: Early 1998

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor



Capcom certainly has been busy this year, with a large number of new arcade games and home conversions being released in the past six months. But *Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix* is like nothing Capcom's ever done before.

At first glance, *Gem Fighter* looks like the sequel to *Puzzle Fighter*. In a way, it is. *Gem Fighter* takes the super-deformed characters from *Puzzle Fighter* and puts them back where they belong: in a fighting game. In addition to the majority of the *Puzzle Fighters*, Capcom has added Zangief, Ibuki and Tessa to the cast, while removing only Donovan and Devilot.

This is not your typical Capcom fighter. First, there's the controls, which only consist of three buttons: Punch, Kick and Special. Now, it's not what you think; you still use the normal move configurations to get special moves (F-D-F-Punch for a Dragon Punch, a 360 for an SPD, etc.). The special button serves two purposes. The first is for Guard Crush moves, similar to those in *EX+α*, which are extremely slow but unblockable. The second is that any special move done with the special button will execute a super move (i.e., F-D-F-Special for a Shoryu Reppa). An important distinction is that blocked specials and supers no longer do tick damage!

The tie in to *Puzzle Fighter* is the that gems that are scattered throughout the playfield and are released when you smack your opponent around. Each character has exactly three special moves, and each move has its own meter, which corresponds to one of the colors of the gems. As you collect gems, your meters increase, and each of your moves will grow in range and power. For example, Sakura's level 1 fireball is small, slow, and goes about half-screen. At level 2, you can completely cancel a level 1 fireball, and the distance and size of the fireball is increased. At level 3, the fireball is

as large as Sakura, does three hits, and travels the entire length of the screen. The size of the gems determines how much of your meter is filled, and diamond gems fill all three meters as well as your super meter up one level.

But wait, there's more. What would a Capcom fighter be without combos? *Gem Fighter* features what are called 'flash combos.' All flash combos start with punch, and are followed by three other button pushes. (Note that the super-deformed characters' arms are so short, that you have to be constantly walking towards your opponent to hit them repeatedly.) Ending a combo with the special button ends the combo in a Guard Crush, making it unblockable and doing extra damage. (Flash combos also do no tick damage if blocked.)

Here's the catch: while performing a Flash Combo, all the characters except Ryu change costumes and hit you with bizarre items. (Most characters also change costume during a Guard Crush.) Some of the more memorable are Morrigan turning into a nurse and running you over with a wheelchair, or injecting you with a giant needle; Felicia can morph into several members of the *Darkstalkers* cast including Anakaris, Sasquatch, Rikuo and even Mega Man; and Dan will hit you with the corpse of his dead dad. In short, Flash Combos are *hilarious*.

Each character also has an incredibly silly, but clearly defined, plot which is revealed through an opening cinema display. Each character also has a unique boss, as in the *Alpha* series.

This game is surprisingly deep, simply because there's an almost unlimited combination of Flash Combos. Plus, despite the reduced reach of the characters, it still feels a lot like a traditional Capcom fighter. Combine this with the winning formula of super-deformed animé and the always lovable Capcom cast, and this game is a definite winner.

The home version, which will be called *Pocket Fighter*, is scheduled to be released for the U.S. Playstation in July. The Saturn version, which supports but does not require the 4-Meg cart, is not expected to be released in the States.

Starved for N64 RPG's? Save your money and buy a Playstation

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have just because I was getting tired of trying to find people and items— I wanted to see how the fight interface worked.

All things considered, the fights are probably the best part of the game. It's a weird blend of turn-based and character movement. On each of your turns, a forcefield surrounds your character showing the maximum distance you can move. If you can reach an enemy with that movement, you can attack physically. If not, you can cast a spell based on one of the four elements if you have the magic points left for it. I'm sure it would get dull fast, but at least it's a little more involved than just clicking on the "attack" button.

Quest 64 has all the elements of a standard action RPG—barely. You win money which can only be used for healing items (or possibly new spells later on). Your character *never* gets new weapons or armor during the game. I'm pretty sure you get XP during fights, although the game never says so one

way or the other. You can find elemental shards or win them in fights that will increase your overall magic potential in either air, earth, fire or water spells.

But while I only played *Quest 64* for about a half-hour, I was left with a feeling of "what's the point?" *Quest 64* is nothing more than a combination of *Mario 64* and *Mystical Ninja*, and lacks much to make it a unique game. Maybe I'm being too critical because it's heralded as "Nintendo 64's first RPG," but comparing it to the Playstation's first US attempt— the horrid *Beyond the Beyond*— I'd have to say that if I was locked in a room and could only play these two games to pass the time, I'd spend more on *BtB*.

With *Quest 64* coming in at a pricey \$64.99 and the Sony Playstation recently having dropped in price to \$129.99, I'd suggest to any potential *Quest 64* buyers to save your money until you can afford a system that has more and better RPGs available for it.